

Timothy Caldwell House
2017 Eye Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington, D. C.
20242

ADDENDUM
FOLIO 10...

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

THE TIMOTHY CALDWELL HOUSE

Location: At 2017 Eye Street, N. W., in Washington, D. C.

Present Owner: The Washington Arts Club.

Present Occupant: The Washington Arts Club.

Present Use: As an exhibit hall, and meeting facility with provisions for feeding and sleeping members.

Brief Statement of Significance: The Timothy Caldwell house was begun in 1802 and has been continuously well maintained ever since. It was the Executive Mansion during the first months of James Monroe's Presidency, and is now considered one of the least altered Georgian town mansions in the area.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Timothy Caldwell house is located at 2017 Eye Street, N. W., in Washington, D. C. The large red brick structure was built in the early 19th century and is the present home of the Washington Arts Club. It is a Georgian town mansion with a main block to the street and a kitchen wing and garden to the rear. The building is flanked on the west by a large apartment building and on the east by late 19th century row houses. The structure is in an excellent state of repair, and most of the original house is in tact.

The house is important both because of its historical associations with President James Monroe and because it is such an excellent example of early 19th century town mansion architecture of the late Georgian style.

The property on which the Timothy Caldwell house stands was originally part of a tract known as the "Widow's Mite" in Montgomery County, Maryland.¹ The land had been patented to the Englishman, Anthony Holmead, and just before this area was changed over to the District of Columbia, the plot was owned by James MacCubbin Lingan, a Maryland officer in the Revolution. When the District was formed, the land was allotted on October 17, 1791 to

Lingan, Uriah Forrest and Benjamin Stoddert. Between 1791 and 1800 the property passed through the ownerships of James Greenleaf, Robert Morris, John Nicholson, William^M Wayne Duncanson and William Deakins. On September 27, 1802 the property was conveyed to Timothy Caldwell by Lingan and his wife, Janet, for \$492.18. The property thus bought was 25 feet wide to the west and rear of 2017 Eye Street. Caldwell built a house on this property, which still stands as the kitchen wing of the present house. This was common in the area. On June 13, 1805, Caldwell paid \$432.50 for 32 feet of land adjacent to his house and added the main portion of the house which now fronts on Eye Street.²

Caldwell and his wife, Ann, sold the property on April 14, 1808 to Gideon Granger of Connecticut for \$10,000. Granger was U. S. Postmaster from 1801 to 1814. On the 10th of February in 1813 Granger and his wife, Mindwell, sold the property back to Caldwell at the same price. On February 7, 1840 Caldwell sold the property to Clement Cox, who was trustee for Francis Markoe, Jr. of Pennsylvania. Markoe and his heir owned the property until June 20, 1877 when it was sold to Professor Cleveland Abbee, who owned it until his death in 1916 on the 28th of October.³ After the death of Professor Abbee the ownership was transferred to the Washington Arts Club, which still owns the building and uses it as a clubhouse.

The building has been occupied by a series of interesting people. The most significant is James Monroe, who occupied the house while he was Secretary of State and later the Secretary of War, during President Madison's term. The house was actually the Executive Mansion for a few months after Monroe's inauguration as fifth President on March 5, 1817. In connection with Monroe there is a tradition that during the war in 1813 the rapid approach of the British surprised President Madison at a meeting in the house, and it was necessary for Madison to gallop through the house on horseback to escape. Tradition also includes the ride of an English officer on horseback through the halls of the Timothy Caldwell house.

The District of Columbia Daughters of the American Revolution placed a bronze tablet on the front of the house in 1923. It has a bas-relief portrait of President Monroe, made by Henry K. Bush-Brown, who was the first president of the Washington Arts Club. The tablet reads as follows:

"This house was the house of James Monroe, Lieutenant-Colonel in the American Revolution. While Secretary of State and of War under Madison and for the first

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six months of his administration as fifth President of the United States, March 4, 1817 - September 17, 1817. Later occupied by Senator Charles Francis Adams, Minister to Great Britain 1861-68, and Dr. Cleveland Abbee, a founder of the Weather Bureau."

Placed by the District of
Columbia Daughters of the
American Revolution
1923

Timothy Caldwell built the original portion of the house in or shortly after 1802. This is the present kitchen wing, but was the entire house at the beginning. There is some evidence that there was a kitchen to the north of this portion, but all that remains is a chimney about 12 feet to the north of the existing structure. The original portion of the house was probably two floors high. Between 1805 and 1808 the main front portion of the house was constructed. The original portion of this area was two floors with an attic. Maude Burr Morris presented the following statement to the Columbia Historical Society on March 20, 1917:

"*** in 1881 Professor Abbee changed the former top or third floor, with dormers into a full story and added the present attic or fourth floor with the same kind of windows, to preserve the original style of architecture. He also built additional rooms in the rear on the upper floors and removed a stable and other outbuildings in the backyard."⁴

The additional rooms he built to the rear appear to be the third floor of the kitchen wing, and by surface evidence they seem to have been added shortly after the third and fourth floors of the main house were put in their present condition. The house is described as being two floors in other sources.⁵

The use of second hand pieces in the finish of the house is indicated in the Federal Writer's Project Works Progress Administration, American Guide Series, Washington City and Capital.

"In the spacious Drawing Room and Library on the second floor are exquisite 18th century chandeliers from an old Baltimore house; in the Drawing Room, also, is an ornamental mantel which was removed from the parlor of the earlier house."⁶

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On August 14, 1963, a fire started in the evening on the floor of the pantry near some paint cans and aged wires. The fire spread through the first floor and into the second before it was brought under control by the District of Columbia Fire Department, which classed it as a two alarm blaze.

The fire began in the oldest, or 1802, portion which was probably the original parlor. The fire destroyed most of the woodwork in this room and the modern kitchen to its north. The door from this wing to the garden, the original front door of the first house, was very much damaged. The doors from the pantry, or parlor, to the dining room and the main hall were destroyed. Trim and plaster were damaged in the two main rooms of the first floor. The stair well had minor damage with scorching to the stairs. On the second floor the rooms of the rear wing were damaged.

The fire caused little serious damage to the basic structure of the house. The prime losses were in trim and plaster. Several of the windows on the front of the building were destroyed, but there was no damage to the roof or floors.

The Arts Club repaired the damage by February 24, 1964. In the interest of expediting repairs and getting the kitchen back into operation the club installed modern kitchen facilities in place of those destroyed by the fire. The kitchen was expanded into the former enclosed porch at the extreme rear of the house, and the 1802 parlor was retained as a pantry.

In these repairs much original trim was lost to similar trim around doors and windows. The door from the 1802 wing to the exterior was replaced with a wood panel door which is only similar to the original.

Even though the reconstruction was not an accurate restoration, it is a functional, efficient answer to an operating institution.

Prepared by Donald B. Myer
Architect
NCDC, National Park Service
Washington, D. C.
July 29, 1963

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FOOTNOTES

1. Maud Burr Morris, "An Old Washington Mansion,"
Records of the Columbia Historical Society.
Vol XXI (Washington, 1918), 114.
2. Morris, 116
3. Morris, 117
4. Morris, 119
5. Federal Writers' Project Works Progress Administration,
American Guide Series, Washington, City and Capital
(Washington, 1937), 456.
6. Federal Writers' Project Works Progress Administration,
American Guide Series, 456.

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Hubbard. HISTORIC HOUSES OF GEORGETOWN AND WASHINGTON
CITY. Richmond, 1958.

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American Guide Series. WASHINGTON, CITY AND CAPITAL.
Washington, 1937.

Morris, Maud Burr. "An Old Washington Mansion,"
RECORDS OF THE COLUMBIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, VOL. XXI,
Washington, D. C., 1918.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The Timothy Caldwell house is a red brick three and a half story building with a slate gable roof. The structure consists of a main block to the street and a kitchen wing or ell to the rear. It is a row-type house located about 15 feet from the street and flanked on the left by a 11-floor apartment building and on the right by 19th century brick row houses.

The house is of architectural interest because it is in such excellent condition and is such an elegant example of a Late Georgian luxury town residence. There has been little alteration in the basic fabric and the maintenance has been good. Also of note are the many well known residents of the house. Primary among these was President James Monroe.

The house has a grey slate roof on the main house and a painted metal roof over the rear ell. The first floor windows are equipped with 3-panel shutters and most of the upper floors have 2-panel blinds. Much of the trim on the front of the house is buff stone and the rear is covered with buff stucco.

To the front of the house the stone foundations rise about 2 feet above the gradeline to form a visual base for the structure. Stone is similarly used as belt lines between the floors around the entrance arch and as lintels. The entry, which has a low broad step, is to the left or west of the rectangular facade. To the right or the east of the entry are three windows, which give a four bay system. These four bays appear on the second and third floors, with four windows each. On the fourth, or attic floor, there are two evenly spaced dormers.

The front door is a 20th century reproduction of the original. It is wood with six panels and flanked by vertical 2 over 2, light double hung side lights. Above the door is an ornamental transom rail with an alternating pattern of diamonds and reeds. Over the transom rail is a fanlight which consists of three concentric bands of glass divided by ten radians. The whole doorway is then surrounded by an ornamental stone archway with reeding and a scroll keystone. Between the door and the sidelights there is a narrow cluster of pilasters.

In the front of the door are cement steps, an iron railing and an iron foot scraper. Next to the door are an historical plaque and an electric coach lamp.

The two dormers on the fourth floor of the front have gable ends to the street. Each has a double casement window with three lights to a side and topped by a small fanlight. There is dental trim on the tops of the dormers and the sides of them have flat pilasters topped by a diamond.

In front of the house is a small yard, with about 10 feet between the house and the sidewalk. From the basement there are an old cellar door, coal chute and an areaway which is mid-20th century. This section of Eye Street is lined with trees and there are two of these in front of the Caldwell house. Across the street is the James Monroe Park, which is triangular running between Pennsylvania Avenue, Eye and 20th Streets.

The rear of the house is covered with buff stucco. The main house is three floors and a dormered attic here and the kitchen wing is three floors and a low shed roof. This ell is reputed to have been the first portion of the structure built and its main door the entrance to the house. This wood door is 6-panels, trimmed in wood and topped by a 4-light transom. To the rear of the kitchen wing is a small recent porch of lattice with an asphalt roof. The rear of the main house is much the same as the front, with the exception of the added stucco.

Most of the windows of the Timothy Caldwell house are 6 over 6 light double hung sash, white painted wood. To the rear of the house there are a few obvious replacements. On the gradeline from the rear of the main house is an interesting door which has been made from a double hung window. The window was high enough so that by making the panel below it swing and lifting the bottom section of sash there is an opening sufficient to allow a 6-foot person. There is a similar door to this in Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria, Virginia.

On the second floor of the main house there is a large concrete deck extending from the main house and butting on the sides of the adjacent house. This is quite a recent addition, but allows direct access to the second floor from the garden and links with the fire escape system from the fourth floor. The stair from the deck to the garden and the railing along the deck are ornamental black iron. A black iron fire escape links the second, third, and fourth floors.

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There are two dormers on the rear of the main house. One is a large modern studio dormer and the other is a simplified version of those on the front of the house.

There are three chimneys on the main house and two on the rear wing. On the garden wall about 12 feet to the rear of the kitchen wing is a chimney that is now unused, but was once part of a utility structure, probably connected to the existing wing.

Of the utility or outbuildings, none remain. There is evidence that there was a stable, a smokehouse, etc.

The rear of the house is now a garden in common with the adjacent house, which is also owned by the Washington Arts Club. Both houses serve the club, and the garden is used as an outdoor dining room. The entire garden is walled in with old brick with two gates to the rear alley. The major portion is paved with bricks and large stones. The rear portion has a large raised, semi-circular stone platform.

The interior of the Caldwell house has plaster walls and ceilings with wood board floors. There are some molded plaster cornice moldings and much decorative woodwork, consisting of moldings, chair rails, wainscoting and paneling. The fixtures on the doors of the main house are of brass and many of the knobs, etc. are oval. The house is heated by modern radiators and lighted by electric fixtures.

The basement of the main house has been remodeled into a modern cocktail lounge with a plaster ceiling and brick and concrete floor. The walls are varied but, for the most part, the stone foundation and side walls have been used in the decorative theme. Modern additions to the basement include a pair of bathrooms and a new furnace room. The rear of the basement under the kitchen ell is relatively unaltered. This section consists of two rooms, directly under the two rooms of the kitchen above. Here can be seen the stone foundation walls and some of the floor framing for the first floor. These timbers have been altered a bit but there are some hewn and some sawn with much of the original construction in tact. Among the original members is the framing for a now removed hearth above the first floor. The construction is mortise and tenon with pegs and wedges.

There is one old winding stair up from the rear basement to the kitchen. A recent concrete stair goes up to the first floor from the basement of the main house. There is also an old outdoor entrance from the street front of the house. This has shed or sloped doors which open up. The basement windows are small and open into areaways.

The first floor has a hall running the entire west portion of the main house flanked on the east by a pair of main rooms. The front portion of the hall has been enclosed by a pair of swinging glass doors into a square vestibule. This appears to have been altered, but from surface evidence there is little clue as to what happened. There is a stone floor in this area which is not original. The remainder of the hall is broken in half, the front portion is the entrance to one of the principal rooms. The rear portion is the stair hall. This one and only stair and hall runs up for the entire four floors of the house.

The main stairway is of mahogany in part and of softer wood in some finish portions. The major portion is painted now as is most of the woodwork in the house. From surface evidence it seems as if the stairway had been finished in a dark color at one time. The stair has a continuous runup to the fourth floor turning on itself at landings set half way between the floors. There is a small open well in the center of the stairway from roof to first floor. At the origin of the stair on the first floor, there is a newel with an agate in the top which is surrounded by a winding banister with balusters and a curving step. The banister is finished in dark natural wood as are the treads. There is wainscoting along the stair and in the hall, similar to that used in the first floor front room. On the sides or ends of the steps is a carved wood scroll covered with bas-relief garlands.

The halls on the first floor have molded plaster cornice moldings. The glass partition forming an entry out of the front end of the hall has an arch above and a fanlight vaguely similar to that in the front door. At the base of the stairway, dividing the remaining hall in half is another arch. This is a good sized affair picking up the theme of the front door and vestibule fanlights. This archway is completely open and is quite attractive. The arch has a simple corrugated pattern with a scroll keystone and rests on like corrugated pilasters, with simple bases and caps.

The front room of the main house was the reception room. It is square and formal with three windows overlooking the street and a wide doorway leading into the rear room or the dining room. The

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reception room has wainscoting of white painted wood, with recessed panels and molded trim. There is a fireplace in the east wall. This fireplace is black marble with neutral veining, and is rather simple with side pilasters and a shelf. The ceiling of the reception room, as in the dining room, has been lowered to accommodate added structural steel. There was a cornice molding put on the lowered ceiling but it is probably much smaller than the original. The only illumination in the room comes from an electric crystal chandelier.

The windows are set in recesses with decorative moldings and panels beneath.

The dining room is finished much in the same manner as the reception room. This room has a pair of openings looking out over the rear garden. There is no wainscoting, but the fireplace and the trim are similar. There is a door from the dining room to the garden which is not original. This is made from a double hung window with a swinging panel beneath.

To the rear of the first floor is the kitchen wing, which has been altered considerably. It is broken into two rooms, the butler's pantry and the kitchen. These rooms have plaster ceilings and walls with wood board floors and modern cabinets. Both rooms have had their fireplaces removed. The butler's pantry is commonly believed to have been the parlor of the original house on the site. To the rear of the kitchen wing is a wooden porch, primarily constructed of lattice.

Across the front of the second floor is the largest room of the house, the Drawing Room. This room has white painted wooden trim and four front windows, much the same as the first floor. There is a wood mantel in the Adams-Wedgwood manner which is reputed to have come from the parlor in the rear wing, now the butler's pantry. This mantel was moved when the main portion of the house was built. The chandeliers in this room and the adjacent library are reputed to have come from a house in Baltimore. These rooms are connected by a wide doorway and are similar in trim. The fireplace in the library is similar to those on the first floor. The hearths throughout the house are of dark red brick. The doors in this portion of the house match those in the main portion of the first floor. They are quite large 6-panel painted wood doors. The rear wing of the second floor is broken into two rooms and a bath. The trim here is later than the rest of the house. To the rear of the main house, from the library, is a recent balcony which is approached by a stairway from the garden.

The third floor, much changed in all respects, carries a good deal of late 19th century trim. The stair hall matches the remainder of the house, however. Across the front of the main house there is a pair of small rooms and across the rear there are a bedroom and a bathroom. The room in the southwest corner is dedicated as the James Monroe Room. This room is finished in tongue-and-groove wainscoting and trim, which appears to have been painted woodgrain at one time. The fireplace is of wood with simple pilasters and shelf. The same mantelpiece was used in the other two rooms on the third floor. The rear wing of the building is possibly the most recently done section of the building and has similar, but more ornate, trim to the front third floor. It uses a more complex tongue-and-groove pattern. At the time that this wing was either built or remodeled a window in the stair well had to be partially covered over on its lower portion to conceal the juncture of the main house and the roof of the ell. The window was covered over in the same multireeded tongue-and-groove board that was used in the third floor of the kitchen wing.

The fourth floor is a dormered space over the main house. There are two rooms across the front and one and a bath across the rear. The finish here is plaster with simple trim, similar to that used on the third floor. There are simple wooden mantels in the front two rooms. The dormers on the front two rooms have casement windows with three lights to a side. The ceilings above these dormers are plaster, the one on the east is a barrel vault and the one on the west is a very flat arch. The barrel vault dormer is probably a latter innovation.

The attic of the Timothy Caldwell house has brick end walls. It is entered from a hatch in the northeast room of the fourth floor. The roof boards run parallel to the ridge and are spaced apart in such a manner that a second layer of boards can be seen. The roof has no ridge pole, and the rafters meet at the ridge and are there fitted together and pegged. These rafters are patched and vary a good deal in spacing, size and finish.

Some of the rafters are much older than the others. All of this indicates that the roof has been changed and some new and second hand members were used. From the evidence in the attic there is little reason to doubt that the roof has been worked on and perhaps raised.

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From surface evidence and historical data the order of construction of the various house elements is as follows:

In a manner typical to the Washington area the kitchen wing was constructed first, probably with two floors, soon after 1802. The main house was started in 1805, and as reputation and surface evidence indicate built with two full stories and a dormered third floor. In 1881 the third floor was extended into a full floor and the fourth attic floor was added. This is reasonable due to the fact that the trim on the first two floors matches and the trim on the second two floors matches, but the two styles are completely dissimilar. That on the top two floors is of the late 19th century type. There is little evidence of this vertical expansion from the exterior of the structure. The brick is fairly well matched on the front and the rear is covered with stucco. There is a difference in window height between the first and second floors and the third floor. The last portion of the structure to be built is the third floor of the kitchen wing. This portion has later trim than the 1881, but is still in the style of the late 19th century. This portion has been remodeled since the 1933 drawings.

The most recent alterations are the balcony on the second floor and the changes in the basement. These were mid-20th century changes.

Prepared by Donald B. Myer
Architect
NCDIC, National Park Service
Washington, D. C.
July 29, 1963

ADDENDUM

HABS No. DC-84

Timothy Caldwell House
(now Arts Club of Washington)
2017 Eye Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

WASHINGTON ARTS CLUB FIRE

14 August, 1963, a fire started in the evening on the floor of the pantry near some paint cans and aged wires. The fire spread through the first floor and into the second before it was brought under control by the District of Columbia Fire Department, which classed it as a two alarm blaze.

The fire began in the oldest, or 1802, portion that was probably the original parlor. The fire destroyed most of the woodwork in this room and the modern kitchen to its north. The door from this wing to the garden, the original front door of the first house, was very much damaged. The doors from the pantry, or parlor, to the dining room and the main hall were destroyed. Trim and plaster were damaged in the two main rooms of the first floor. The stairwell had minor damage with scorching to the stairs. On the second floor the rooms of the rear wing were damaged.

There was little serious damage to the basic structure of the house. The prime losses were in trim and plaster.

Several of the windows on the front of the building were destroyed, but there was no damage to the roof or the floors.

The house was subsequently repaired and returned to active use and the Arts Club's headquarters.

Prepared by
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Architect
National Park Service
15 August 1963

Addendum to
Timothy Caldwell House
(Arts Club of Washington)
2017 I Street, NW
Washington
District of Columbia

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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ADDENDUM TO
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